

January 23, 2007
Education Subcommittee

My name is Roxa French. I am speaking in support of three program areas of MSU Extension.

NOXIOUS WEEDS

In Montana, weeds are not welcome. Estimates of 4 cents per acre to prevent noxious weeds compare favorably to the \$25 or more per acre it could cost to control them if they become established. Landowners have been proactive in getting involved in Weed Prevention Areas and MSU Extension's role has been to raise awareness and teach best management practices for weed prevention to avoid costly remedies later. Working with MSU weed prevention coordinator, county weed boards, county commissioners, Bureau of Land Management, Forest Service, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, conservation groups and local producers, MSU Extension helps organize and educate landowners in such topics as minimizing soil disturbance, weed identification skills, and recognizing and reducing likely locations for new invasions. It takes a collective effort to keep uninfested acres weed free and Extension is involved in weed prevention and management education efforts statewide.

FORESTRY STEWARDSHIP

Preserving open lands, economic concerns and traditional ways of life are all critical issues in Montana. MSU Extension's Forestry Stewardship program puts forestry management skills in the hands of non-industrial private forest landowners. Workshops help these landowners evaluate their forest acreage, learn to identify insects, diseases, wildfire hazards, noxious weeds, road maintenance needs, stream dynamics and riparian ecology, and alternative forest harvesting practices. MSU Extension's innovative forestry stewardship program connects forestry professionals with landowners to help landowners write their own management plans. Using what they learn, landowners develop action items to meet their land-use objectives. By the end of 2005, 28% of the non-industrial private forest landowners in MT, with a combined ownership of 943,597 acres, had participated in MSU Extension's Forestry Stewardship program. MSU Extension puts management skill in the hands of landowners.

HEALTHY HOMES INITIATIVE

MSU Extension's Housing and Environmental Health program provides training and education to help Montanans keep their homes healthy. From well water testing to detection, prevention and mitigation of health hazards like radon, carbon monoxide, lead, molds and asthma triggers, MSU Extension teaches residents about environmental health risks in their homes. In addition to MontGuide publications, online fact sheets and other education tools, Extension's housing and environmental health program developed touch-screen kiosks. For many household topics, self-guided learners need knowledge on demand when the topic arises: through the kiosks in public places like libraries and shopping centers, visitors can assess their own home's environmental risks, print out risk factors, and get more information on home safety. The kiosks are part of the Healthy Homes project funded by EPA, Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and the USDA.